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**STRONGER ARTS
AND CULTURAL
ORGANISATIONS
FOR A GREATER
SOCIAL IMPACT**

CREATIVE LENSES

Catalyst programme

Case study

**PROJETE
INGENU**

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PROJECTE INGENU

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Creative Lenses is a four-year project, running from 2015 to 2019, that seeks to make arts and cultural organisations more resilient and sustainable by improving their business models and developing their long-term strategic and innovation capacities.

To find out more about Creative Lenses and its publications, visit www.creativelenses.eu



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Introduction

This case study explores changes made by Projecte Ingenu, a performing arts organisation based in Barcelona, Catalonia, Spain, as a result of thinking about its business model and the challenges encountered as part of the process. Business model is a contested term, but the following definition captures the essence of the idea:

A business model describes an organisation’s activities and assets and the ways that they are combined to create value for the organisation itself, for individuals and for society.

This definition highlights that business models are not all about money-making. Business models are to do with how organisations combine resources to create and capture financial and other forms of value within different institutional logics. Creating a successful business model requires finding people, funders and partners that value what an organisation does and are willing to enter into financial or other exchanges to access it: directly, as a user or customer, or indirectly, as a funder, partner or donor.

There are several possible ways of describing business models. This case study uses a combination of dominant approaches in order to detail the important parts of the organisation as well as the relationships and behaviours that have enabled it to succeed over time. To situate the business model within its context, the case study highlights the mix of political, economic, social and technological factors informing existing business models whilst also indicating instances where contextual factors call for adjustments to the existing model or a shift between one model and another. Throughout the case study, the role of institutional logics, organisational cultures and personal motivations in shaping business model design and choices of how to change or modify business models comes into the frame.

This case study is one of eight written as part of Creative Lenses (2015-2019), funded by Creative Europe. As part of the project, the partners designed and implemented a series of eight ‘Catalyst’ projects in 2017-2018, during which an arts and cultural organisation was provided with resources to make changes. The project did not prescribe any particular type of change, leaving organisations to identify their own priorities and objectives. For Projecte Ingenu these resources were: financial support (€11,750), mentoring support from one of the Creative Lenses partners and a series of workshops attended by all the organisations and mentors.

As a kind of action learning, the research applied an analytical lens to the practices and experiences of the organisations participating in the Creative Lenses Catalyst Programme. The purpose of the research was to understand what approaches were taken to business model change and why, and to question how organisational cultures and institutional logics have shaped and been shaped by the process. The research explores the relationship between the frameworks of values underpinning cultural work, the organisation’s particular mission and the need to produce sufficient income. Data were gathered through interviews, site visits, participation in workshops and document analysis. The case study was written by academic researchers and members of the organisation and its mentors were invited to review it.



Sustaining ‘Slow Theatre’ through a ‘Slow’ Business Model

Projecte Ingenu is a young independent performing arts company based in Barcelona, Catalonia in Spain. With a vision for creating ‘slow theatre’ challenging how theatre is made and shown, the organisation has developed its practice through being based at Barcelona’s Nau Iwanou cultural centre, working with established theatres and touring. The case reveals that the ways Projecte Ingenu sustains itself has opened up issues of organisation, communication and how the group anticipates the future.

The key learning points from this case are:

- The task of articulating the business model can be a way of engaging the whole organisation in the process of deciding objectives to sustain its future and negotiate artistic, political and financial priorities
- Thinking about ‘business models’ introduces new concepts and preferences: such change is not a neutral task and may be resisted
- Articulating its business model illustrated the dependence of Projecte Ingenu on the wider cultural ecosystem in Barcelona

Organisational Overview

Projecte Ingenu is a young, independent, not-for-profit theatre association based in Barcelona in the Catalan region of Spain. Owned by its 12 founder members, it initially operated as a non-hierarchical collective, with all decisions made by the whole group. As an independent theatre company, Projecte Ingenu sees its role as an agent of change at two levels: changing the role of theatre in society and also changing society, by working outside established theatre institutions and working practices. In the organisation’s own words:

‘Projecte Ingenu was born as a research group about theatrical practice, with the aim of merging professional work with personal development and investigation of a possible model for the contemporary actor. We began an actoral training based on ancient Greek chorus and vocal music experimentation, working on the rehearsal room but also on non-conventional outdoor spaces. We started to use the concept “slow theatre” to define us. The Slow Movement addresses the issue of “time poverty” through making connections. We are constantly looking for connections that return us to humanity, to all that relates to life. We applied this philosophy in our rehearsals: the scene got naked and

*the actor became the centre of the piece. Theatre is the relationship between the actor and the audience, hand to hand, in every word. This experience, this humanity does not have limits, it crosses borders.”*¹

Organisational Background

Established in 2013, Projecte Ingenu’s vision was to develop a new way of making theatre that was not market-orientated, but which engaged with audiences in a way that would have benefits for society. Based on the principles of the Italian ‘slow’ movement, which advocates a slower pace of life and deep connections with communities and places, Projecte Ingenu describes its practice as ‘slow theatre’.² Founded and developing during the Catalan independence crisis, Projecte Ingenu – whose name translated from Catalan into English is ‘naïve project’ – illustrates the complexities of sustaining a theatre practice that is both cultural and political.

As an emerging organisation, Projecte Ingenu did not have a clearly defined business model when it began. Indeed, according to one member, at first the group didn’t want to develop theatre productions; they wanted to be a research group.³ Projecte Ingenu began as a group of practitioners, newly graduated from the same college, who wanted the opportunity to experiment, investigate, grow and develop their work outside of the constraints of their day-to-day employment. They felt they needed a space in which they could take risks, developing artistically and creatively, something that wasn’t available to them through typical commercial theatre employment.

The importance of having space for experimenting was the group’s core focus at the beginning, overriding any other consideration, including developing a sustainable, financially viable way of working or a formal business model. Early on members of the group identified that they lacked management skills, finance and business experience. As part of slow theatre, Projecte Ingenu has a strong commitment to community and to social issues. Its productions are not just about entertaining an audience:

*‘[They] take into account the participants and wider community in the context of future development, using an actor centred approach... what they mean by this is using creativity as a form of social development, for instance as a tool for building bridges instead of walls with regard to the refugee crisis’.*⁴

This is illustrated through the collaborative production they created for an event called ‘Night of the Museums’ in Barcelona in 2017. For this, they worked with community members and volunteers to produce a happening within the museum crowd over one night. It proved a successful experiment ‘overcoming social conventions and rediscovering new ways of communicating and relating to each other’.⁵

Current Business Model

Projecte Ingenu is an association, registered under the name of its director. It is based at the Nau Ivanow cultural centre in Barcelona. Nau Ivanow was established in 1998 as a space for the creation, production and diffusion of contemporary culture. The building, an old paint factory, is owned by the city council. Nau Ivanow is a foundation with fifty per cent of its funding coming from the city, part of the Fàbriques de Creatió initiative⁶ of Barcelona City Council to support cultural experimentation, and the other half from the Catalan regional government. Nau Ivanow rents out co-working spaces, rehearsal rooms, a theatre, a rooftop social area and offices to local creatives. Initially accommodating any type of local creative organisation, in recent years it has shifted to focus on independent performing arts organisations. While not funding any of the projects it houses, Nau Ivanow provides space and acts as an incubator, helping these organisations to grow and develop. Its aim is to help artists, projects and organisations to expand and internationalise their organisations.

Projecte Ingenu’s key activities involve creating and giving performances (both local and touring), conferences, education programmes and work-shops. Recent productions have included Romeo and Juliet (by Shakespeare, in Catalan), Yerma (by Lorca, in Spanish) and Top Girls (by Caryl Churchill, in Catalan). These activities are underpinned and reinforced by their research, investigation and experimentation into new ways of making theatre.

Local, regional, national and transnational politics impact on Projecte Ingenu. Barcelona has long been a city that supports the creative industries and the cultural sector.⁷ The Catalan regional government is an advocate and investor in culture too, seeing culture as an assertion of the region’s autonomous cultural heritage and identity. In addition, institutes and foundations provide a range of resources including some that promote Catalan language and identity. The Spanish government also provides funding, for example for international co-operation.

¹ <http://projecteingenu.com/en/projecte-ingenu/>
² <http://projecteingenu.com/en/projecte-ingenu/>
³ Interview, Barcelona, 2018.

⁴ Mentor report, 2017.

⁵ Mentor report, 2017.
⁶ <http://ajuntament.barcelona.cat/fabriquescreacio/fabriques/que-es>

⁷ Its budget for culture in 2017 was €132 million (5% of the total budget) according to Projecte Ingenu.



However much of this funding is oriented to existing institutions and infrastructure or for large-scale promotion of the arts or entertainment. There is little available for new or independent organisations, in particular with the approach Projecte Ingenu is developing.⁸ Further, as an association, rather than a company, it is harder for an organisation such as Projecte Ingenu to apply for public funds. Independent arts organisations that are unable to access money themselves benefit from support and resources through intermediaries such as Nau Ivanow. Meanwhile, the Catalan independence movement, triggered around the independence referendum of 2017, has demonstrated the deep tensions in Catalan and Spanish society which result in uncertainty about future cultural policy and funding.⁹ In this difficult context, public funding is insecure and difficult to gain access to for Projecte Ingenu.

However the organisation is able to navigate the cultural infrastructure and access resources. Projecte Ingenu works closely with Theatre Akadèmia, based on the edge of Barcelona's Eixample district and supported by a charitable foundation. Established in 2007, Theatre Akadèmia commissions work from local and international independent companies, basing their

⁸ Unpublished project document, 2017.

⁹ The Catalan independence referendum of October 2017 was declared illegal under the Spanish constitutional court. It led to the Spanish national police trying to disrupt the vote, resulting in shocking scenes of police violence, followed by

the Spanish government imprisoning many elected Catalan politicians and taking back of administrative control of the region. Direct rule from Madrid was lifted in June 2018. However the independence issue is far from resolved and several elected politicians remain in prison or in exile.

programming on principles of research, reflection and debate. Projecte Ingenu is further developing this relationship through a second residency with Theatre Akadèmia. Another theatre space in Barcelona, La Seca Espai Brossa, also periodically hosts Projecte Ingenu's productions. These relationships with theatres are important to Projecte Ingenu, but touring is more financially profitable than a season in Barcelona.

Since it was established, Projecte Ingenu's income of around €60,000 a year has been derived solely from its productions, whether through shows commissioned by established theatres or from ticket sales from seasonal and touring performances. Projecte Ingenu's co-production of Yerma commissioned by Theatre Akadèmia provided 50 per cent of its annual income that year, with only ten per cent derived from a grant from Barcelona City Council and the rest made up of income from tours and other productions.¹⁰ In 2016-17 the box office sales from productions enabled them to break even. A typical performance might attract an audience of 200 people. Around half are young people, with the other half comprised what the team terms 'middle-aged intellectuals', alongside family and friends.¹¹

As a collective, Projecte Ingenu does not see itself as having staff as such, although the organisation does have volunteers (both members of the association and others) who help with events and productions. But since being founded, there is a shift to formalisation in the group, as one member explains:

*'The organisation doesn't have an organisational structure because it is only three years old but organisational development is now important for the group, to clarify and consolidate the company. This means being clear about responsibilities.'*¹²

Whilst Projecte Ingenu has a good relationship with key partners who provide the spaces for them to rehearse and perform in and commission its productions, its long-term aims are to increase in size, work more internationally and ultimately own its own building. Such a vision raises questions about how its commitments to research and to slow theatre can be accommodated within the current systems and processes through which theatre productions are commissioned, financed, marketed and shown in Catalonia and beyond.

¹⁰ Unpublished project document, 2018.

¹¹ Unpublished project document, 2018.

¹² Unpublished project document, 2017.

Organisational Culture and Values

Projecte Ingenu describes two types of value the organisation generates; income through ticket sales from productions, and the creative and artistic value it offers them as practitioners, with the emphasis very clearly on the latter. When discussing income generation, they describe themselves as conflicted. Members of the group clearly feel a tension between the need to be creative and artistic and the necessity to earn money to pay their bills. As a member explained, ‘I don’t consider Projecte Ingenu as a business. We know we are not here to [get] rich’.¹³ Instead she sees it as a space for her to grow as an actress.

Members of the group are acutely aware of the tension that exists between the organisation’s objectives, values and core direction and the necessity to generate income to sustain these. As a member describes: ‘It’s really frustrating when you are working too hard and not being paid, there’s no alternative, we do it voluntarily’.¹⁴ The individual members make compromises in order to contribute to and be part of Projecte Ingenu. As one says ‘You have to be super committed or rich’¹⁵, hinting at awareness of the inequalities this rests on. Only performers and artists who have the capacity to be involved in the group, can be involved.

The challenge, then, is to continue to balance the organisation’s creative vision with the economic, policy and political realities they operate within. Discussing the implications of this, another member of the group points to a need to shift to organise:

‘...to work like a real, professional company. We don’t have enough money to pay us, this is a problem – none of them [the members] do it to make them rich. They don’t stop the work because it isn’t bringing in enough money, they have an artistic motivation. If we are more organised it is easier to do one thing and the other, a living, is a consequence.’¹⁶

Managing Business Model Change

Projecte Ingenu’s business model could be described as one that emphasises serving primarily the organisation’s practitioners, rather than their audiences or other stakeholders. Members of the organisation strongly emphasise the important role Projecte Ingenu plays in their life, both professionally and personally. As one member stressed, they have an ‘artistic

motivation’, needing the opportunity to investigate new methodologies of making theatre. It is an emotive issue for members. For another, ‘It’s something I really believe in’.¹⁷ For another, ‘It’s my life, I can’t live without it’.¹⁸ Projecte Ingenu’s significance for its members in terms of their creativity and artistic development cannot be understated, according to one member of the group:

‘I feel, for example, it’s more interesting, what I’m doing with Projecte Ingenu, rather than the soap opera everyday. It helps me to be a better actress and helps me to grow up, the feeling of doing what you like.’¹⁹

Since being set up, Projecte Ingenu has worked in what could be described as a haphazard way – ‘chaotic’ is how several members describe it. Members sustain themselves financially through other employment, including in performance. They dip in and out of the organisation’s work when they are able to give time, depending on their other work and personal commitments.

When reflecting on the topic of business models, some members of the group emphasise ‘business’ as ‘finance’. Finance, more specifically income, also frames how they believe they can sustain their activities, as they identified in the initial discussion with their mentor:

‘[T]he great challenge for us is applying our philosophy, “slow theatre”, in discovering a financial management model appropriate for us. Maybe a “slow financial model’.²⁰

While finance is always a concern for small, precarious organisations such as this, a business model can provide a structure for organisations to understand how it creates value, and how it sustains itself. This is something that the group is now becoming more aware of: ‘Business model definition is the way that one group organise itself to make their activity sustainable’.²¹ For Projecte Ingenu, however organisational sustainability should not just be seen in terms of surviving at any cost. The group’s origins and principles point to ‘solid foundations for slow growing’.²² What they have developed, perhaps, is a ‘slow’ business model to support their philosophy of slow theatre, emerging in relation to place, context and opportunities.

¹³ Interview, Barcelona, 2018.

¹⁴ Interview, Barcelona, 2018.

¹⁵ Interview, Barcelona, 2018.

¹⁶ Interview, Barcelona, 2018.

¹⁷ Interview, Barcelona, 2018.

¹⁸ Interview, Barcelona, 2018.

¹⁹ Interview, Barcelona, 2018.

²⁰ Interview, Barcelona, 2018.

²¹ Helsinki workshop, 2017.

²² London workshop, 2018.

Creative Lenses Catalyst project

Within the Creative Lenses Catalyst Programme, Projecte Ingenu used the associated mentoring, financial resources and broader discussions to explore several areas of work related to their long-term goals. Through the mentoring and workshops in 2017-2018, they identified that focussing on business model development would enable them to find ways to sustain and fund their slow theatre methodology.²³ These actions can be grouped into three core areas: strategic development, organisation design, and audience development.

Catalyst Project Action One: Strategic Development

In terms of strategic development, Creative Lenses gave Projecte Ingenu the time, space and some conceptual tools to reflect on what it does, building on things it does well and learning from what did not work so well, to explore what members want in the future and how they might achieve this. The funding, mentoring and discussions within Creative Lenses helped them build capacity in thinking ahead, being more strategic and working collectively to explore what these futures might mean in the present. This action resulted in two main outcomes.

First it allowed them to articulate their artistic methodology, through development of a new show based on *The Tempest*. Second, they developed a three-year plan. Two members of the team developed this in close consultation via workshops with the whole of Projecte Ingenu, with the aim of agreeing guidelines for developing future productions and activities. As one member describes, this was ‘The first time we think about the future’.²⁴ These discussions have enabled them to plan further than the next show.

Catalyst Project Action Two: Organisational Design and Processes

A second action was in the area of organisation design and processes. Whilst members describe Projecte Ingenu as a horizontal, non-hierarchical, flexible structure in its day-to-day operations, discussion and interviews revealed ways of working to be more complex in practice. In particular the organisation’s reliance on the director became more visible. Several of the members interviewed described the director as being the main driver for the organisation:

‘Before [Creative Lenses], [the director] does all, absolutely all. When Catalyst arrive in our lives we understood that the only way to grow is fragmenting the work, sharing the jobs between us, makes the organisation more powerful.’²⁵

²³ Mentor report, 2017.
²⁴ Interview, Barcelona, 2018.
²⁵ Interview, Barcelona, 2018.

The director’s central role in the organisation is typical of small, creative organisations with a founder or key person who establishes the organisation and takes the lead in operations. In this case, the director’s activities include everything from directing performances, translating texts, negotiating with partners to completing the accounts. This reliance on one person could be detrimental to Projecte Ingenu’s future sustainability. As one member explains:

‘Without [the director] Projecte Ingenu would be shaky, I hope in the future solidity without [them], different legs of Projecte Ingenu will have solidity to work without [them]. Now [due to the Catalyst programme] we are working without [them].’²⁶

Through the Creative Lenses project, Projecte Ingenu defined and agreed roles for different members and a process for decision making. It created teams responsible for different parts of the organisation such as production, marketing and communications. This led to more clarity about responsibilities and less of the ‘chaos’ that members of the group previously described. This delineation of roles and functions has produced a more structured internal organisation with separation of the production team and the administration, and better internal communications. Projecte Ingenu’s members all participate in decision making through regular meetings and, with their newly defined roles, they are more conscious of operations outside of their theatre productions, some now taking more responsibility for this work. Plans to create different ways that members can be part of Projecte Ingenu will be developed, taking into consideration the precarious nature of their employment outside the organisation and other commitments. In addition the organisation developed and tested a model for its external communications, including a new newsletter, relating to shows, teaching and tours.

Catalyst Project Action Three: Audience Development

A third action took the form of creating a ‘laboratory’ for investigating and developing its audience development approach. The main focal point was *Escena Germinal*, a five-day festival they organised and held in 2017 in multiple venues both in and outside of Barcelona, attended by 40 participants. This was:

‘An encounter between artists, arts practitioners and audience. This can take the form of workshops where experienced and recognised artists work with young artists (actors, writers, set designers...) to start

²⁶ Interview, Barcelona, 2018.

what Projecte Ingenu call a “germ”: a seedling experience investigating different relations between the theatre and its audience, always thinking about the audience as active participants.’²⁷

The festival allowed Projecte Ingenu to clarify who its stakeholders were, connect with existing and new audiences, as well as raise the organisation’s profile. But it also had creative results, allowing them to better understand and articulate the potential of slow theatre, described as follows:

*‘The project is researching human behaviour through theatre.
To change something in people’s lives through a human experience.
Slow theatre as a way of improving life.
Audiences should have an emotional experience.
Create a ritual experience, which is hard to find nowadays.
To provide a feeling of community.
Slow theatre as a way of defining a new audience experience, leading to wellness and a better society by helping people to remember they/ we are all human.’²⁸*

Following the success of this festival pilot, Projecte Ingenu plans to develop Escena Germinal into an ongoing programme of events, including an annual festival. As well as helping the organisation develop and articulate its artistic mission of developing slow theatre, Escena Germinal may also become an additional revenue stream supporting the organisation’s other activities in the long term.²⁹

Results and Discussion

Projecte Ingenu could be described as having an approach that responds and adapts to new opportunities. The organisation exists primarily to serve members of the group enabling them to develop their creative practice. In this it is probably not dissimilar to many other small and independent theatre groups. Sustaining the organisation requires dedication, commitment and hard work, as well as agility and the ability to survive on very little income, if any. Thus the members of the organisation themselves sustain this business model by sacrificing opportunities for having a secure or larger income. At present, members of Projecte Ingenu are willing to do this. However this might change as their personal circumstances change in the future. On the one hand, the fluid nature of the membership and their varied inputs to the organisation also potentially threaten its stability and survival. On the other, this diversity allows the group to access and learn from diverse perspectives and expertise.

²⁷ Mentor report, 2017.
²⁸ Mentor report, 2017.
²⁹ Interview, Barcelona, 2018.

Exploring business model innovation in the Creative Lenses project allowed the organisation to address some of these challenges. First, Projecte Ingenu acknowledged the need to operate in a more organised, structured ‘business-like’ way in order to sustain its activities in the future, enabling members to continue developing their slow theatre methodology. Defining different functions and roles relieved the responsibility on the director, and enabled the organisation to draw on other members’ skills. This led them to feel more involved and working closer as a team.

These developments have changed how members view Projecte Ingenu, as well as the language they use. Members of the organisation use more business and organisational focused terminology.

‘It gives me the opportunity to learn about the business and I never thought about that, I never had the need to understand the business before now. With the Catalyst programme it helps me to understand the global business. Now I’m more conscious about how difficult it is to organise a company to try to be sustainable. Personally it helps me to grow up and in an artistic way it gives us this dialogue between us.’³⁰

Changes to how the group is organised have allowed them to think about a wider context for their work: ‘For the first time we think about things internationally, we see the possibilities to explore other countries, to know other ways to work’.³¹ However, some members have concerns about the organisation’s future sustainability if they become too closely associated with ‘business’: ‘Maybe we will start to feel, maybe we will be more functional for example trying to follow the rules of business without spirit’.³²

This project enabled Projecte Ingenu to clearly define and articulate the tension between the mission of the organisation - which is artistic and creative - and the need to provide an adequate income for each participant. As one member describes:

‘I don’t consider Projecte Ingenu as a business, I think Projecte Ingenu at the beginning was space we wanted to find, each person has other work. To find a space to grow up as an actress because the industry didn’t allow us to do this, always thinking about the result but not the process, to investigate, as a theatre company we are growing up very fast but we are not ready to say we can live from Projecte Ingenu.’³³

³⁰ Interview, Barcelona, 2018.
³¹ Interview, Barcelona, 2018.
³² Interview, Barcelona, 2018.
³³ Interview, Barcelona, 2018.

In its early years, Projecte Ingenu’s collaborations, commissions and relationships with other theatre organisations have enabled it to develop its ethos of slow theatre and collective decision making. Without these partnerships, it seems likely that its sustainability would continue to be precarious, unpredictable and ultimately in question, particularly as its members develop their own personal projects and, in some cases mainstream professional careers. As one mentor summarises:

‘Although the company is young and in the first phase of evolution, their commitment and readiness to embrace challenging interventions around finance and management is refreshing and there is no doubt about their creative, artistic and, indeed, social innovation.’³⁴

The actions that Projecte Ingenu took through the Creative Lenses project suggest that business model change enables the organisation to think holistically about its context and future and develop new capacities for change: ‘Small things are happening, just because we talked about them.’ This strategic, future-oriented thinking allowed the group to explore and articulate how they would like to grow and develop as an organisation, resulting in increased capacity to grapple with the uncertainties of the environment they are in.

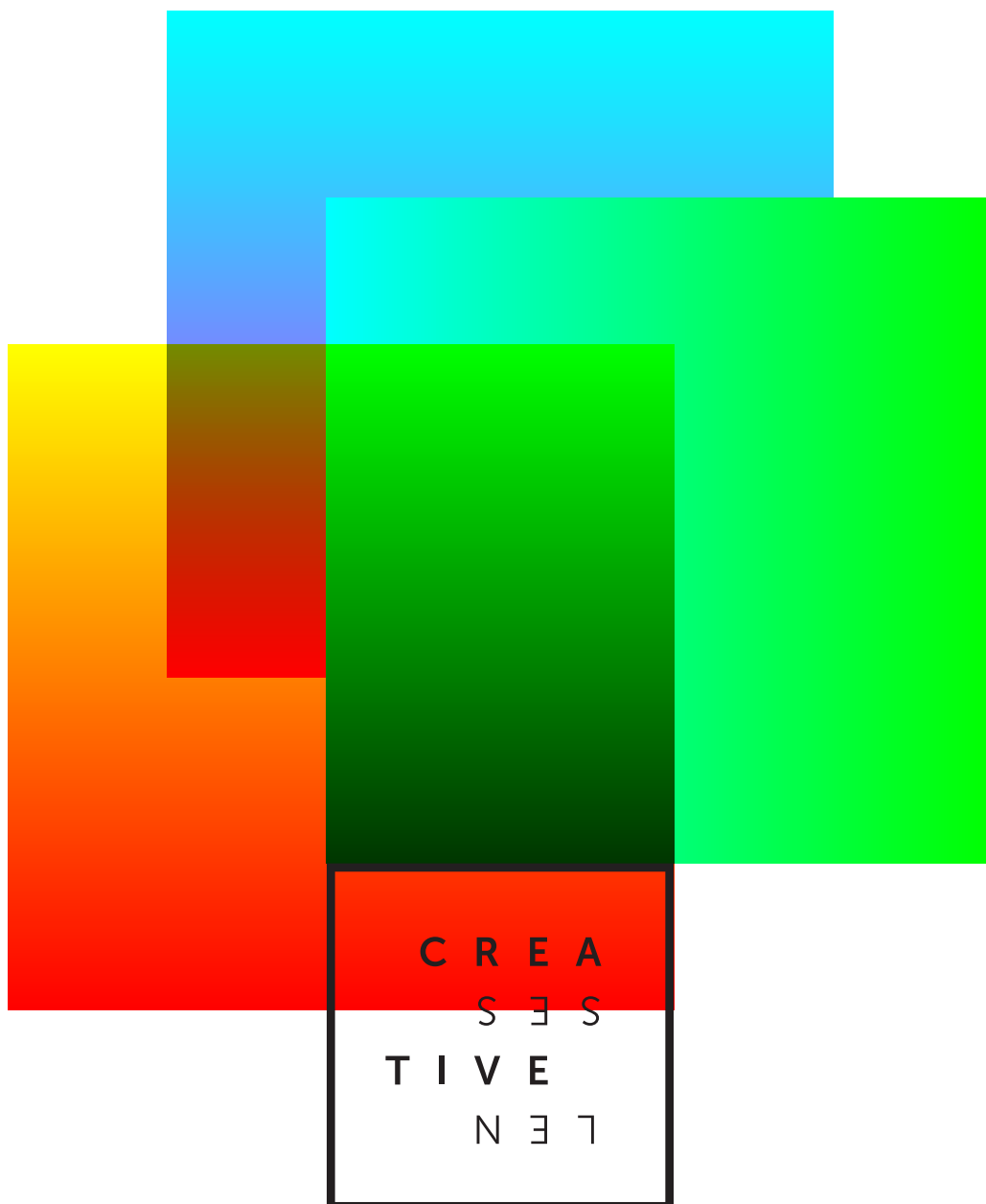


³⁴ Mentor report, 2018.

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